

House Republican Press Release

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Representative Harkins Signs Petition For Special Session To Limit Eminent Domain Powers



Legislation Would Prevent Taking Property To Benefit Private Developers

Hartford, CT-State Rep. John Harkins, R-Stratford, has signed a petition calling for a special legislative session to limit the state's eminent domain laws that have been used to seize private property and turn it over to private developers. Republican lawmakers held a press conference at the State Capitol on Friday, September 16 to begin their petition drive for the special session, which would enact a moratorium on any eminent domain action for commercial development purposes.

Last week, the New London Development Corporation (NLDC) began evictions in the Fort Trumbull neighborhood to roust residents who challenged the taking of their property all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. On June 23, the court ruled, 5-4, that the city can seize seven middle-class homes to allow a private developer to build a hotel, conference center, offices and upscale housing.

The Republican petition drive was prompted by a lack of action by majority Democrats, who have publicly endorsed a moratorium but refused to actually call a special session that would impose one. Instead, Democrat leaders mailed letters to every town and city in the state notifying them of their position. While the NLDC also publicly embraced the moratorium at that time, the eviction notices, which included demands for \$600 in monthly rent for the houses that the people are living in, were sent last week.

“The Supreme Court ruling permits taking property for private development but also allows states to limit their own eminent domain powers,” said Rep. Harkins, who serves as an Assistant Minority Leader. “Our Legislature needs to take action to provide homeowners the same type of protection 11 other states have approved since that ruling was made. It is simply unacceptable to wait any longer when cities and towns can still take a family's home for projects that economically benefit private developers. The fact that a home can be taken and person may not be able to find a comparable dwelling is unsettling. The elderly are especially at risk when relocation could mean they would have to be burdened with yet another mortgage. One might ask themselves, ‘Why don't Democrats care?’ ”

On Tuesday, June 28, Rep. Harkins voted in favor of a similar proposal that was defeated in a nearly-party line vote. The Legislature held a special session that day to complete work related to the 2005-2007 state budget.